RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HAMILTON C. CARSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Hamilton C. Carson on October 10, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Joshua Appelbaum: Joshua Appelbaum.

SI: Mr. Carson, thank you very much for taking the time to be with us today.

Hamilton Carson: My pleasure, no problem, glad to help.

JA: Can you tell us a little bit about your childhood in Palmyra, New Jersey?

HC: Well, it's a normal childhood, I guess. It's a small town of about five thousand people down north of Camden on the Delaware River, small town atmosphere, played games in the street, baseball and so on, and went to Palmyra High School. There was only one high school in town and I was editor of the high school newspaper and in the [National] Honor Society and that sort of thing, and then, went to Rutgers.

JA: How did you get interested in journalism?

HC: Well, I got started in high school, as I said, on the school paper. I originally had a scientific curriculum down there, but I decided that I preferred writing and journalism. So, when I came to Rutgers, I took the journalism major.

SI: Could you tell us a little bit about your father and mother? Where was your father from?

HC: My father was born in Northern Ireland in 1872. He was fifty-six when I was born. He came over to this country, either New York or, probably, Philadelphia, when he was fourteen. That would have been 1886, which, if he had come into New York, might have made him the last boat to come in before the Statue of Liberty [laughter] or the first boat to come when it was there, but I think he came into Philadelphia. I regretted that I never really got that straight. My mother was born in Philadelphia. She is about three generations in this country. They got married and they both lived in Philadelphia, moved to Palmyra after they got married, [and] had six children, of which I am the youngest.

SI: Did your father ever explain why he came over or what his life was like before?

HC: Well, they were a big family of ten or eleven. I think four or five of them died over there. You know, they didn't do well. They didn't come over, particularly with the potato famine, as I understand it, but they all had this idea of the streets lined with gold in the US and they would make their way. So, I think they came over in two groups. My father and his twin brother were the oldest. They came over three or four [at a time], and then, three or four more some years later. [They] tried to get each other jobs, the typical immigrant story. My father, ironically, I know a lot of people have always dreamed of going back to the old country, back to Ireland and all that, he said, "I never care if I ever go back. It's much better over here." So, he was very happy with that decision.

JA: When did your family come here?

HC: Well, he came in 1886. My mother was born here in 1888.

JA: He was a boy when he came over.

HC: Yes, he was fourteen when he came over. My mother was born in Philadelphia.

SI: Did he start working on the railroads when he was young?

HC: Yes, he was there with [the] Pennsylvania Railroad for, I don't know, almost sixty years, I think, in Philadelphia.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

HC: She didn't while she had a family. She was a secretary or something before she got married, for ten or fifteen years, whatever that was.

JA: Can you tell us a little about your older brothers and sisters?

HC: The three older are girls and they did not go to college. They got out of high school. My oldest sister got out in 1937, the second in 1939 and the third in 1941. Except for the Depression, at least one of them, maybe all three, could have gone to college by normal standards, but there wasn't any money for it. … Socially, there was no thought that women really had to go to college; they should just get married and raise a family. So, they didn't. My older brother, who is four years older than I am, got out of high school in '42 and I remember, in 1941, on Pearl Harbor Day … every senior had to write an autobiography, which is kind of presumptuous, that a senior in high school would have enough life to write about. I remembered him putting a line in about, "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor and it looks like we're going to get into war and this might affect my future." Well, of course, it did. He was drafted the next year and was in the infantry and was in the landing at D-Day and, fortunately, escaped with his life. Not too many people can tell you about D-Day, because not a heck of a lot of them came back. My next older brother is two years older than I am. He got out of high school and went into the Air Corps briefly and was let out as the war ended. I was in the Army after college, when the Korean War was on. I was in for six months, but I have a heart murmur. When I was trying for OCS, they let me out. So, it didn't break my heart. My two brothers did go to Gettysburg after the war and I went to Rutgers in '46, before my service.

SI: When you were growing up, how much news did you hear about what was going on in Europe and Asia?

HC: Oh, we followed very closely, … at least I did. During World War II, I had a big map on my bedroom wall with all the pins showing Hitler's advances and the Russians' retreats and the Russian advances and Hitler's retreats, and so on. We knew about the war. There wasn't full-time news coverage as there is now, you know, twenty-four hours a day, beating the subject to death, maybe a couple of newscasts during the day. It wasn't even an hour of news. Maybe

there was evening news, fifteen minutes, and some kind of morning news, but we knew. You know, we read the papers. We knew what was going on, no sense of isolation or anything like that.

SI: Do you remember, before Pearl Harbor, Hitler's rise to power?

HC: Oh, yes, yes. I remember hearing Hitler on the radio, ranting and raving in German, going into Czechoslovakia, going into Poland and the Danzig [Corridor] and the whole thing. We thought he was a madman. Nobody thought he was really going to be out to conquer the world, but he came fairly close to doing some of those things. One of my earliest memories is listening to Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who was convicted of the Lindbergh kidnapping, talking from his jail cell shortly before he was executed, insisting that he was not guilty, but, no, we were aware of all those things.

JA: You grew up during the Depression. How do you think that impacted you? What can you remember about that? How did that affect your family?

HC: Well, the biggest impact is, when my wife throws food away that had gone bad or hasn't been eaten, I get very upset, or somebody pours milk down the drain. You know, when you grew up with six in a modest income [home] and everybody was, you know, struggling to stay alive, you appreciate those things, and so, yes, I have been accused of having a Depression mentality, as a lot of people my age have been. You know, I still remember nickel ice cream cones and nickel candy bars and my kids tell me to get into the current century. So, I have recollections of that and you appreciate the things more, I think, having gone through it. We're now … into our second or third year of economic slump, but, you know, people aren't selling apples or jumping out of windows [in] despair and so on, but I worked for a guy once who said, "What this country needs is another depression to shake out the misfits." [laughter] He would have loved it. He would have stood there and watched them starve, this guy. No, I would say that made me appreciate what it takes to make a living and get ahead and so on.

JA: For a long time, you have considered yourself an affiliate of the Democratic Party. Is that where that originated or was that something else?

HC: Yes, my parents both, I guess, had been Republicans until the Depression, and so, I started out with their sympathies. I consider myself liberal. I'm a Democrat, something like that, but … I don't think I've ever voted a straight party ticket. … I voted, about two or three times, maybe, straight Democratic, once straight Republican and almost always in-between with picking and choosing and so on, which I gather is not too customary. I talked to people who said they don't like somebody, but they won't vote for the other candidate. They just won't vote for the one that they really despise, but they would never think of switching. I don't know why that is. New Jersey has a reputation of being a swing state and I don't know that it's people swinging so much as not voting or voting. I think the swing comes in when the other side just sits on its hands. I don't know. It'd be interesting for some political scientist to do a doctoral thesis on it, maybe.

JA: What did you think of FDR?

HC: Oh, we thought the Earth revolved around FDR. I remember when we heard that he had died. People figured the world would probably come to an end. … 1945, I was seventeen and, oh, it was a shock to everybody. Of course, he was roundly despised by thirty to forty percent of the electorate who thought he was just, you know, the work of the devil, and he had started the doom of the world as we know it. There are still people that will claim [that] whatever is wrong with society was Roosevelt's misdirected effort to fight the Depression. You know, I'm sure there were things there that were started, the whole idea of welfare, which was to get you on your feet until you could get a job and people reluctantly took welfare or they worked WPA [Works Progress Administration] or PWA [Public Works Administration], whatever it was, and the joke was that they leaned on their shovels, but, you know, they did do something and they tried to do something. I remember when a gal who was my assistant had left to look for another job and I remember her saying, [after] one month, three months or six months or whatever, she says, "You know, my unemployment is just about run out. I guess I'm really going to have to get my curriculum vitae," or whatever you call it, "my resume up-to-date and get cracking." You know, that's something that wouldn't have happened and shouldn't happen. I mean, that wasn't ever the idea. The idea was desperate times need desperate measures and for as long [as] you need them and only as long as you need them. It's not a paid vacation while you're in-between. So, to that extent, things have happened that were not intended and that probably, in recent years, have started to be addressed with this harder look at welfare.

SI: Did you notice any other ways that the New Deal affected your community?

HC: Yes. There was a high school stadium [that] was built, a very nice one, and, to this day, it's probably better than most high school stadiums. I still don't know. … Our town was Republican and, if it was politically motivated, I don't know how we got blessed with it. It was a huge project. There was a town hall that was built with public welfare, PWA, Public Works Administration, I guess. Beyond that, well, there was an artists' program for people in the arts and the theater, to help artists. I remember, an artist came in and painted murals on the high school hallway of, you know, Americans of all colors and shapes working together and advancing into the future and all of that sort of thing. Some of these are very well-respected. Now, you see people referring to art murals in public buildings and so on that had been covered up. Somebody opens them up and they make a big deal out of it. So, yes, those are the things I remember about the Depression years. Of course, if you had public welfare then or were on the dole in some way, you didn't brag about it. I mean, this was something you generally considered a mark of shame and you were not proud of it. So, it's not generally known.

SI: Was your father able to maintain his employment?

HC: My father was able to maintain his job. He didn't have a big income, but he maintained his job. I think there were some cutbacks during part of the Depression, but, fortunately, we struggled through. It wasn't easy, and then, in the late '30s, as I say, my oldest sister got out of high school, started working, so [that] she could contribute a little bit, but the Depression still lasted, really, into the start of World War II. There's no question about that. It was alleviated somewhat, but it wasn't until the war that it really started to fade.

SI: What do you remember about Pearl Harbor Day?

HC: Well, I remember, I was at a football game, I think in the town, and somebody said something about; … now, the Japanese had been negotiating. There were a couple of them in Washington and we didn't understand completely. It had to do with trade allowances in the South Pacific and so on. It didn't seem like anything urgent but somebody said the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Well, none of us knew what or where Pearl Harbor was, so, we got home and started listening to the radio with our families and soon found out it was in the Philippines [Hawaii] and so on. Yes, I remember that vividly, when we heard that. Of course, we didn't treat [Japan as a threat]. … Japan was then a country that made cheap plastic toys and I remember going to school and talking to my classmates. We figured, "Well, we'll beat Japan in about two weeks, because, you know, how can they [win]. It's a little, tiny island out there in the middle of nowhere." I don't know whether our parents had any clearer idea. I suspect they did, but I don't think anybody realized Japan was going to be a force that would, you know, conquer all of the South Pacific, with millions of people dead before the whole thing was turned around. So, if it hadn't been for the atomic bomb, there could have been, you know, tremendous casualties in the invasion of the Japanese islands. Fortunately, it didn't go that far.

JA: How did the war affect your community?

HC: Well, guys registered with the draft. … Families had service stars in their window and, if it was a gold star, it means somebody had died and, every week, the paper would have, you know, casualties, missing-in-action and dead, and so on. So, there was always that grim thing hanging over our heads. As kids, we didn't worry as much as our parents did, I suppose, but we were still aware of it. People were going off. People were leaving school early to sign up in the Army, the Navy. You'd see people in military outfits coming home for leave and whatnot. … I don't know that we consciously thought about it, you know. Every once in a while, we figured, "Well, if this war keeps up for a couple more years, I could be in it," but … I don't think we seriously thought [that]. You know, you have a way of hiding reality when you want to and when you're a kid. So, I don't know that we thought that often about it.

JA: Your brother was in the service. What sort of mind frame did that put you in?

HC: Well, I'm sure my mother must have really suffered through this whole thing, especially when the casualty reports would come in. I remember, 1944, my brother was in the Battle of the Bulge in France, Hitler's last effort to do something, and we hadn't heard from him, but I remember her at Christmas dinner. We hadn't heard from him in, I don't know, four weeks or six weeks or something like that, so, she must have been carrying that. We thought of it, but, you know, [we] figured, you know, that it's going to happen to somebody else, but it won't happen to your own family. Fortunately, he survived that and that was the last real blast from Hitler at that point. They just ran through them.

SI: Did you correspond regularly with your brother?

HC: Yes, I used to write him. My mother wrote him and my brothers and sisters wrote him, so, he got plenty of mail back and forth.

SI: What about rationing and the blackouts?

HC: Yes, we had rationing. We saved tin foil. That's sort of a joke now. Nobody ever knows … what anybody ever did with the tin foil. Nylons for women, that [had] just come out. They were impossible to get, because they made parachutes out of silk. If you wanted to get meat or if you wanted to get something at the drug store, you had to return fat, cooking fat, which, of course, could be used in explosives. Meat was rationed. Shoes were rationed. You had so many points in little books and tokens and so on. That didn't affect us too much. I think, every six months, a kid could get shoes, and so, parents didn't get shoes that often, anyway. Butter, I think, was rationed, sugar, coffee for a while. So, you lived with those things. There was a black market in meat. You'd hear stories about somebody who got meat somewhere, but, you know, compared to what the servicemen had, [what] they were going through, you didn't really complain about that, although I remember them being very sympathetic, "Well, we had all the food we wanted. You poor folks back home couldn't get it." Well, we didn't want to change places with them on that basis.

SI: Was Palmyra a place where many GIs passed through? Was there a United Services Organization in town?

HC: No, no, nothing like that, although it was not far from Fort Dix. It's only about thirty, forty minutes from Fort Dix. We were near there and that's where most people starting got their training; Camp Kilmer, which was just up here in New Brunswick, and I think it's where Livingston Campus is now, or where the site used to be, where you got out of the Army and came through. I remember my brother coming through there.

JA: Did you know anyone who was opposed to the war or was a conscientious objector?

HC: I knew of somebody in our church who was a conscientious objector and I'd heard of one or two others, not many.

SI: We have heard some stories about the very beginning of the war, that there was a rush to enlist among men of that age. Some who got turned away, for various reasons, in some cases committed suicide.

HC: Somebody committing suicide because he couldn't get into the Army?

SI: That is kind of an extreme example.

HC: No. There were people that wanted to get in, but had flat feet or were too old, and I don't remember any real tragic stories related to that; the old movies … show people, you know, lying and sneaking and trying to get in and so on. The one thing that I think is correct, that [has] … changed, is that people really, really lined up to get in that war. That was the honorable thing to do and nobody thought twice about it. [The] Korean War was a little less, then, the Vietnam War, even less, because people started thinking, "Do we really need this war? Is it an honorable war? Is it any of our business?" and so on and people went off into Canada and did all sorts of

things to avoid it. During World War II and World War I, there was this patriotic rush into the enlistment thing. It was more common then.

JA: How did the war reflect in your high school paper, if at all?

HC: Not at all, really, except to say that somebody had left school earlier, was home on leave or something, somebody who had left school to be in the Army. It was a very provincial little thing, high school sports and activities and a gossip column, that kind of thing, nothing of any serious nature.

JA: How did you come to your decision to attend Rutgers? Was there a financial consideration in coming to Rutgers?

HC: Yes, there was. I'm trying to remember. I applied, I think, at Princeton, Rutgers. I thought for a while of Missouri, which is good in journalism, NYU, Washington and Lee. I got catalogues and did some … applications there, but I got a scholarship at Rutgers and it was a hell of a lot cheaper. I didn't get accepted at Princeton to begin with, so, yes, financial consideration is important and I had heard about it, read about it. [I] read a book called the *Ivy Years* by Earl [Schenck] Miers about his time at Rutgers, which influenced me favorably, and then, when I got to Rutgers, I was on *Targum* and he was at the Rutgers University Press, which was right next door, so, I had to go over and interview him at one point. So, it was a very impressive situation, wherein this guy [that], sort of, I idolized from afar, [I] went [and] interviewed. So, yes, financial consideration was important.

SI: Do you remember where you were when the war ended, both in Europe and in Asia?

HC: Yes, sure. I certainly remember when the Japs surrendered and the Germans, well, I think I do. I think I was home and the Japanese, I remember being somewhere, seeing the headlines about this massive bomb that had [been] dropped on Japan. We didn't know anything about the atomic bomb at that point, and then, within a couple of days, Japan surrendered and there was people parading in the streets and laughing and crying and carrying on and so on. So, yes, I remember all those moments.

SI: When you first came to Rutgers, it was just rebuilding from the war. Can you talk about those early days?

HC: Okay. I came in '46 and, of course, that's the big year that the veterans came in. [In] '45, you're … still in the service. I don't think anybody got back in time to start that year. So, it was a strange year, more in retrospect than in actuality. We were here, seventeen, eighteen-year-old kids, you know, silly, immature kids and here were [the] veterans, some of whom had been wounded and been through the horrors of war and were all, I would say, at least two, three, four or five years older than we were. So, it was a strange mix and, in the dorms, there'd be kids my age and there'd be a couple of veterans and the kids, you know, young kids, are just free from discipline and home life and so on. They're kicking up their heels and screaming and having water fights and all the silly things that college freshmen do and the veterans were pretty serious, because [of] two reasons, I think. Some of them would have never gone to college, either for

financial [reasons] or because their grades weren't good enough and here they are, on the GI Bill, getting into college and they'd been through hell, so, they appreciated the idea of college and what it could do for them. So, they tended to be more serious. The kids out of high school, as I say, were immature and more easygoing. Nevertheless, we seemed to get along pretty well. They were mixed in the dorms, in the fraternities and the classroom, but the one thing you would see was the seriousness of the veterans. Now, during that first term at college, I remember, the veterans were supposed to get some monthly allotment, twenty-nine or forty-nine dollars, I don't know. Some of the other graduates have probably told you the figure and, … for some reason, bureaucratic or otherwise, there was a delay in their getting the money. So, they were bitching and moaning and carrying on and trying to live on a very tight budget while they waited for this money to come in. It eventually came in, I guess with all the back money and so on, but that was their first main problem, but they didn't really dress like college [students]. They were wearing the ragtag remains of their Army uniforms, green field jackets and so on. So, it was really common to see a veteran with at least one piece of clothing that he survived the war with and the conversations with the vets were always following the same line, "What were you in? Where did you serve? Were you here? Were you there?" and so on. So, they had to relive all their battles of where they had been in the war and that carried on for four years, because… that four-year period is probably the biggest period for veterans in the college.

JA: At any point, did you feel disadvantaged, as someone who had just come out of high school, whereas the veterans were coming in on the GI Bill and receiving allowances?

HC: No, I don't ever remember anybody being resentful of that. Perhaps they were. I don't ever remember anybody bringing it up or talking about it. I think we were pretty, generally, sympathetic to them. The one important difference [was], I think, when I went on *Targum*, it was a collection of high school kids who had edited their high school papers, and then, we had half-a-dozen editors who had done serious writing in the Army, a guy from *Stars and Stripes*, a guy from *Yank*, that kind of thing. These guys were real, you know, seasoned journalists. So, we got good experience being with them, because they knew how to write and how to get a story and so on and they sort of took us under their wings and so on. I've always thought it was a little amusing to see veterans, who had been through so much, come back to college, and then, some of them will be cheerleaders or in the booster club or in, you know, rah-rah kind of things. After all they've been through, you would think they'd be much too mature for that, but, in a sense, they were reliving, for the first time, a youth they never really had, because they were snatched away at seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and I guess they were happy to get back to campus. … The papers now, college papers, are covering world affairs and attacking the President and, you know, talking about … what we should be doing in the Middle East. We never had any of that. Our paper was almost exclusively devoted to what was going on in college, the quality of the meals and the mess hall, fraternity discrimination was an issue, loyalty oaths came in as an issue, but world affairs were totally ignored. We figured it was not our scope to do it and even the veterans [agreed]. You would think, with veterans there, they would be saying, "No, forget about the pep rally for the big game, let's talk about world affairs," but, as I say, they seemed to have liked this idea of getting back into this atmosphere that they had missed out on.

JA: Although the *Targum* was not a forum for world affairs, did you have private conversations about those topics?

HC: Oh, yes. We'd have conversations about universal military training and whether we should be here or there, the nature of the Cold War and that kind of thing, but it didn't get into the newspaper, into the *Targum*.

JA: How do you suppose that experience enriched your education?

HC: Well, as I say, we had really experienced editors on the paper and that certainly helped me. I learned a lot more, I think, on *Targum* than I did in the journalism classes. The Journalism Department was not great. Ken Merwin was the head of it. We all liked him, but the rest of them, three or four others, one was disastrously bad I think, leave his name out, but the others were pretty good. … The Journalism Department was not as good as I expected it to be and it has since had its ups and downs. I don't know [if] it has changed its name and I don't even know where it is now. Were you a journalism major or are you?

JA: I am not a journalism major.

HC: But, the *Targum* helped me. I think being with older people helps mature you, too. So, that was a double advantage.

SI: Do you remember some of those men from *Targum*?

HC: Oh, yes. I have three close friends from college that I stay in touch with for over more than fifty years. All three were on *Targum* and a fourth, Frank Long, who just died, he was editor of RU something, '76.

SI: *1766*.

HC: Yes. He was on *Targum*. I knew him fairly well. I mean, I didn't really stay close to him, but, yes, the friends I made at *Targum* are the ones that I kept over the years.

SI: Could you talk a little bit more about some of the issues that came out in the *Targum*? You mentioned loyalty oaths.

HC: Yes, loyalty oaths, the quality of the food in the cafeteria, the need for greater State support for Rutgers was an issue and we went down to Trenton. I think I went down once to the State House when some bill was being debated. At that point, we were hoping for a state income tax, which we thought would solve all the problems of Rutgers. Of course, anybody that voted for state income tax got his head handed to him at the next election, when we finally got around to that and it hasn't solved [all the problems]. Well, I don't know what the financial situation is now, but colleges, like opera companies and theaters, were always desperately in need of money, and hospitals. You wonder, "How can they charge so much and still be losing money?" but that seems to be the nature of the beast, but that was an issue. Parking, most of us didn't have cars; I'm just trying to think. Of the high school grads who came to Rutgers, I can only think of one who had a car. I myself got to and from college by train on the weekends. If a guy had a car, you know, you could go out to get something to eat or whatever at night, but more of the

veterans had cars and it got to be a problem. One of the big issues was the need for a traffic light at College Avenue and Hamilton Street. I don't know, is there one there now?

SI: Yes.

HC: That wasn't there then. … "How many more people have to smash up their cars before we get a traffic light?" So, that was an issue. Housing was an issue because there weren't enough dorm rooms or fraternity spaces for everybody. So, for a while, an area called Raritan Arsenal, which was on Route 1, north of here, had old Army barracks and a lot of people had a year or two in there. The classic joke, any time the President [spoke]; Clothier was president then and he had this sort of stock speech we all heard about four times. [Mr. Carson imitates President Clothier] "Several years ago, our college was faced with a great decision, whether to remain a small, colonial college or to open our doors to the veterans coming back from the war. We chose the latter course." That was his big speech on how Rutgers was answering the need for an expanded college and they did pretty well. So, those were the issues. I'm trying to think; I can't think of any other burning issue, really.

SI: It seems as though the infrastructure of the college was straining under the pressure of all these new students.

HC: Yes, I think it was. Probably, it was expanded greatly afterwards. We had a Dean of Men, an Assistant Dean of Men, and I don't know, whatever you call the moneybags, Registrar. Of course, everybody hated the Registrar's Office. People complained about prices going up and so on, but when I think [about] when I was at college, the dorm cost two hundred dollars a year I think. It might have been two hundred a semester. I think it was two hundred dollars a year and maids came in every morning, made our beds, mopped and dusted and we complained that they didn't wax the floors or something. I forget what it was. [laughter] Nowadays, you know, you guys will be lucky just to have the room. Nobody would ever do any maintenance, right? absolutely unheard of. We complained about the quality of the housekeeper. Anyway, where are we?

JA: Did you live on campus?

HC: I lived in the dorms. I lived in the Quad, the whole time. It's my impression that a lot of the veterans were commuters, probably for financial reasons or because they were then married, I'm not sure. It might be interesting for you guys to try to find out … what percentage of the campus was commuters in those years, as compared to [those] living on campus. If I stayed here for a weekend, the place would be like a ghost town. I would guess eighty percent, ninety percent of the kids would leave. I don't know if it's still like that, but, of course, the commuters, if they were thirty or forty percent or more of the school population, would leave every evening, but the dorms were filled and the fraternities were filled, and, even in the fraternity, where you would expect more kids to hang around, I don't think they did. Whether that was because of the war or the aftermath, I don't know.

SI: What about the Hillside Campus?

HC: The Hillside Campus was… married vets living in, I guess, Army barracks and mobile homes and all kinds of stuff. Yes, there were a number of people there and some had wives and children out there. It was all for married people, I guess. Yes, I knew some from there. I don't have any particular recollection. They had their own problems, I guess, about space, shuttle buses to get back and forth from campus and so on, but that seemed to work pretty well. Along the river here, just across from the Quad, there were a whole row of prefab barrack-type buildings where we had a lot of classes, because there was a classroom shortage. That was called, maybe, University Heights, I'm not sure, or is University Heights on the other side of the river? There's a dorm now on the river, a three or four-story dorm that was put up, I guess, twenty-five, thirty years ago. [On] that strip between George Street and the river, there were, perhaps, I don't know, a dozen of these little, crappy little prefab things with a kerosene heater in the middle. It was not a pleasant way to go to class. I think they were still using some of them by the time I got out of school, but maybe most of them had been removed by then. They built some new buildings. They just started building on the other side of the river. I remember, I had chemistry over there. Selman Waksman was the big hero, with streptomycin and so on. I guess there's a hall named for him, isn't there? So, they had just started that. Otherwise ... almost all the classes were along College Avenue, in engineering or chemistry or the German house. I don't know if they still have those language houses along the street. [In] Bishop House, I had a couple. This was mostly history and political science [that] I had in this building and the gym, of course, was across the street, before the RAC [Rutgers Athletic Center] was built, so, you had gym and swimming and whatever over there and all the games.

SI: You mentioned that Mason Gross was your favorite professor.

HC: Yes, he was a delightful professor. He taught philosophy and a lot of people who didn't really have much interest in philosophy took the course, because he was just such an electrifying speaker. He was very good, and of course, you know his career since then. He went on to, was he provost or was he ever a president? and then, the School of Theater and Arts is called Mason Gross. I don't know why that is really. Did they just name it to honor him? He had nothing to do with that.

SI: It was just being built.

HC: Well, it's well-deserved. He was good. Merwin was good. Richard P. McCormick, who I think I saw in the coffee shop just now, I didn't talk to him, he's still hanging around. He must be eighty-four, eighty-six, something like that. He taught New Jersey history and other American history [courses]. He's not still teaching, I'm sure?

SI: No.

HC: His son was just touted for president, but he's now in Seattle [at the University of Washington] or somewhere. He's not interested.

JA: He turned down the job.

HC: Yes, I never knew him.

JA: I also saw that you were a member of the Quad Club. Was that a social club for the Quads?

HC: Yes. I wasn't too active in that. They met, I don't know, every month maybe. I went to a few meetings, but I didn't really have much to do with that. My social life really revolved around *Targum*. We were all good pals there. If we had free moments, we'd stop in there. We'd do things together, things like that.

SI: The *Targum*, from what I understand, in this period, got into many disagreements with the fraternities.

HC: Yes. When I was on the *Targum*, every time the editorship went from a fraternity man to a dorm guy, there were problems, because we were campaigning against discrimination in fraternities. Fraternities, then, tended to be Jewish, even Catholic fraternities, not just Christian, but … Protestants; and blacks were rarely in any of them. There was a group, with Bucky Hatchett, who was the big football hero at the time, who formed an integrated group of their own. So, that was the thing and, … I remember, we didn't cover fraternity activities, Greek Week. Do they still have Greek Week? and we didn't cover that, to their dissatisfaction. So, the big memorable event was when they, apparently, had a beer blast somewhere and they came down singing, "Let's all go and piss on the *Targum* house," which they came down and did. I was in the building, doing a term paper or something, and came out. It was all sort of light-hearted, but our editor got very serious about it and he had a huge headline the next week called "Rain of Terror." "How dare people do this," he said. But, you know, people tend to get a little worked up about things. Generally speaking, there was no real animosity. It depends on who you knew and what you did. If you're involved in sports, I guess the paper had a little more of the sports focus and so on, but it wasn't a big [deal]. …

JA: Was your editor-in-chief a dorm man or a fraternity man?

HC: Well, [it] depended. When I was managing editor, I guess he was not only a dorm man, he was sort of the campus Communist, which got people a little upset, because his politics tended to get into the paper sometimes and he was active in all sorts of left-wing groups. So, that didn't make him too popular on campus, but, then, other times, there were fraternity guys running it. You know, we thought it was all pretty serious stuff at the time, but, looking back at it, it was not really very Earth shaking.

SI: Did you have any inkling of what the political climate was on campus?

HC: You mean what would be the political line up?

SI: Yes.

HC: For national or state politics?

SI: Conservative or liberal?

HC: No, it's hard to say. A lot of Rutgers kids come from working-class backgrounds, did and I presume still do, and, in those days, of course, the working-class background meant you're a Democrat. Now, it's more likely to mean you're a Republican, because things have turned, but I would guess, and it's only a guess, that it might be sixty percent Democrat and forty percent Republican, you know, something like that. I don't remember anybody ever trying to analyze it.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

SI: Your class is unique in the fact that it was a little more diverse than the classes that had preceded it at Rutgers. For example, Bucky Hatchett was your president.

HC: Yes, I'm sure … it was a little more diverse than had been the case in the '30s or the very early '40s, before the war. Bucky was a big campus hero in football and basketball. I don't know what the black population of the college was then. Of course, with the GI Bill, they would have opportunities that they wouldn't have had before, either getting accepted … in a previous time, when there might have been quotas. So, you could probably get the result of that. I don't know. I don't know what it would be now, but, yes, you would have the older guys, you would have veterans, you would have high school kids and so on. So, it was a pretty good mixture and, looking back, my feeling is that it's surprising to me that it went as well as it did with those different age levels. You would think there could be animosities, but I don't really remember any serious alignments of veterans versus non-vets or anything like that. They were just happy to get an education and trying to get the government, the allotment from them and maybe starting a family, that kind of thing.

SI: From our perspective, as we study Rutgers from the 1930s through the 1950s, it seems like the veterans changed a lot of the traditions. Many fell by the wayside. Freshmen did not have to wear dinks, for example. Did you see those things fading away when you were here?

HC: Yes, yes. You would get a better perspective, having talked to people in different graduating classes, but, in my freshman year, we still had chapel, compulsory chapel in the chapel. It wasn't very long, sixteen, eighteen minutes, something like that. You filed in. We sang a couple of hymns and somebody gave a brief talk and it probably never occurred to anybody that, if you weren't Christian, this wasn't probably the most appropriate thing to do. [laughter] So, you know, this is the original roots of the thing, when it was really a Christian college, I suppose. I don't [know] whether they ever had quotas here, as the Ivy League is reputed to have had, Harvard and Yale, those places. They may have, I don't know, but, yes, some of those silly beanie kind of things, you couldn't very well get veterans to put a propeller on their head after what they've been through. I don't know about, did we have a tug of war or am I thinking of high school? It seems to me there was some kind of a tug of war, where we got out in NJC, as it was known then, Douglass, and Passion Pond and a rope stretching across the water, the freshmen against sophomores and see who gets pulled into the water. That was about, probably, the last remnant of one of those things. I doubt if they have anything like that nowadays and, of course … this was before drugs and it was even before alcohol, because, you know, while the fraternities or some other fresh guys would think about having a beer, this would be very daring, but, you know, nobody could have died from drinking two gallons of gin or whatever. There are some horror stories about Scarsdale High School, of all places, where, I

don't know, thirty percent of the kids that came to that school dance were in very serious shape from drinking. That would have never happened. It never occurred to us to do it.

SI: Did you work while you were on campus?

HC: Yes, I was a busboy at the building behind us here [Records Hall], which had been intended for Russia under lend-lease. Anyway, … originally, the first semester, I think, the cafeteria was in the old College Avenue Gym until this building was complete, and then, I was a busboy there for three years, and then, I was campus correspondent of the *New Brunswick Daily Home News*, which is now called something else.

JA: The *Home News Tribune*

HC: Which is combined with…

SI: It is the *Home News* and what used to be the *Tribune*.

HC: Over near Carteret or what is it? Woodbridge or somewhere like that.

JA: Yes, their newsroom is in Woodbridge.

HC: … I was busboy for one of the meals and you got a two-dollar allowance and a meal card and, for two dollars, you could eat at the cafeteria for three meals. Sometimes, you went ten or twelve cents over and maybe the sympathetic gal at the cash register would not charge you for it. So, that should give you an idea of the prices then. As I say, I think the dorm was two hundred a year. They estimated that you would need three hundred a year for food, and then, tuition, maybe was five hundred or something like that. … You know, people were making thirty, forty dollars a week, fifty dollars a week, something like that. If you worked all summer, you might get a couple of hundred dollars together. So, relatively, it may not be that much difference.

JA: You were active in Scarlet Barbs. Can you tell us more about it?

HC: Yes. I wasn't too active. This was the non-fraternity group. I edited a paper for them, a couple of issues, but they had a couple of dances and activities, speakers, once in a while. I was not a big fraternity-type myself, so, I wasn't really crazy about having a non-fraternity fraternity. So, I was not that eager to get involved. I just preferred to have my own circle of friends whatever, they may be or so on. So, I can't really contribute much to that. I don't even know, is there still such a group on campus?

JA: No. If I understand, it was a governing association of some sort.

HC: No, no. It was just a social thing. It was just sort of, … like, the Quad Club would be something like it, but most of these were, they would meet a couple of times and, you know, debate some question about whether there should be a soda dispensing machine somewhere, that kind of thing, nothing very Earth shaking.

SI: You were in ROTC for two years.

HC: Yes, everybody had to be in ROTC. Well, veterans, I guess, didn't. Yes, that's another thing that has changed. I guess that ended not long after 1950. We had uniforms. We had a class two days a week on military strategy and disassembling the M-1 rifle and all that kind of thing, and then, on Tuesday afternoons, as I remember, you had to get the uniform on, go up to Buccleuch Park, parade around for a couple of hours, and so, you were presumably, then, … more ready for military action. Now, I don't know whether that's because we were a land-grant college; is that the connection? I guess it is, yes. Some people resisted that and thought it was a sort of an anachronism, but there were no big debates about it, that I recall.

JA: What was New Brunswick like back then?

HC: New Brunswick was a crummy town. There was a bar on every corner, practically. Somebody counted them and claimed that they had more gin mills per square block or square mile than any other town in the world. It was not an attractive town at all. There were three or four movie houses. There was the Albany and there was one just near the railroad station, the Rivoli, the State Theater, which has now gotten into bigger things, with ballet and music it's done and another great old place called the Opera House, a big, old, wooden place. … Do you know where New Street is? Is there a parking lot in there, somewhere about in there? There was one halfway decent restaurant on George Street and the big college hangout was called the Corner Tavern or CT, which is on the corner of [Easton Avenue and Somerset Street]. It may still be there.

SI: Right, it is there.

HC: Okay. I went in there once, years later. I was in town for some reason. I went in; it didn't look like it was the college hangout then and I've since learned that there are other places up and down Somerset or Easton Avenue or somewhere right? In fact, I guess I was back for a reunion and they took us on a campus tour and that's what they were talking about, but that was the place. That was the only place I really remember, the CT, if you wanted to have a beer or see the guys or, you know, eat out in splendor, but the rest of the town was a grim looking place, nothing really recommended. It looks a hell of a lot better now than it did then. I mean, you've got good restaurants and you've got this on George Street, sort of, like, a mall effect there with shops and stuff. So, I think it's definitely on the upswing.

JA: Your first job coming out of college was with the *Courier*.

HC: *Camden Courier*, right. I was just a temporary reporter, waiting for a regular assignment, and, at that point, after about nine months, six months or so, the Korean War broke out and I got drafted and, as I said before, I was in the service for about six months, and then, they let me out. I went back to the *Courier* briefly, for a few months, then, got a job on a trade magazine in Philadelphia called *Farm Chemicals* and I was at that job for about three years, and then, was hired by one of its competitors. [I] went to New York in 1954, and then, became editor of a magazine in the printing industry called *Modern Lithography*. I was editor of that for, I don't know, sixteen, seventeen years, and then, a magazine called *Household and Personal Products*,

which covered the cosmetic and the detergent fields. So, I was in trade journalism for over forty years. I retired at the end of 1993.

SI: How did you react to the outbreak of the Korean War?

HC: Well, I don't know. I remember thinking it was a just war, because Korea had been invaded and we were responding. Since then, everybody seems to think that it was a dumb war to get involved with. It's sort of a "forgotten war," because it's overshadowed by all the controversy of the Vietnam War, but I think we generally thought it was a just war. We had to go in. Of course, when the Chinese got involved and practically took over the whole of South Korea, it didn't look so good, and then, the negotiations dragged on forever to get out of it. So, I'm not sure what it all proved in the end. At the time, we seemed to think it was something we had to do and it came only six years after the end of World War II. So, it's a wonder there wasn't a bigger outcry against it at that time, because of all we'd been through.

JA: How far along in training did you go before you were discharged?

HC: I was just in basic, just winding up basic training.

SI: Why had no one caught the heart murmur before?

HC: They did. I had it since I was in high school, I think, or maybe since birth, and, when I came in, I told them about it and they heard it. They said, "Okay, you're okay," and then, I was trying for OCS and got another physical and people were getting accepted for OCS. I figured, "Well, God, I should be bright enough to pass the mental tests. I'm as bright as some of these guys that have gotten in, I'm sure," and I presumed I'd … pass the physical, and then, finally, somebody called me and said, "We're going to let you out of the Army." I said, "All right, I won't fight you, if that's your position," but, then, I was a little worried that maybe I was really more seriously involved than I thought, but that was fifty years ago and I'm still playing tennis and golf and walking two miles every morning. So, I guess it was not a fatal illness, whatever it was. So, it was sort of ironic, if [I] hadn't tried for OCS, I probably would have been dead in Korea.

JA: Were you disappointed at all that you could not serve your country?

HC: No. I was a little abashed by it, you know, being in and out so quickly and having to explain it, but I had no real desire to get killed. I can't pretend otherwise. [laughter]

SI: Did you cover the war at all during your time with the *Courier*?

HC: No, I was strictly working on the local police beat. So, I didn't go out to the war.

SI: You mentioned that you traveled extensively for your job. Do you have any stories about that?

HC: Well, I worked for a guy who is deathly afraid to fly. He was the publisher for the last twenty some years, so, he was delighted to have me do anything that involved flying. In this trade journalism, there'd be international conferences of scientists or whatever connected to various fields we covered. So, I got to go, about a dozen times, overseas and took my wife on almost all of them. So, he was delighted to have me do it and I would go take my wife, and then, we'd add three or four days to the trip and do some sightseeing on our own. So, since retirement, we've had a couple of trips, one around France and, most recently, one of the most recent, was to Budapest, and then, Prague and Vienna, which was a delightful trip. We fell in love with Prague particularly. It's an interesting place. We haven't done any traveling in the last couple of years. We had hoped to get over to Ireland to do a trip, and then, my wife got sick. She got better about the time we were going to leave, but, by then, we had cancelled the thing. So, we may still do that one of these days. So, I've enjoyed that, although, as you get older, jockeying suitcases around, waits in airlines and making connections gets a little more tiresome, but it's fun to do.

SI: How did you meet your wife?

HC: She was working in Philadelphia at this first trade magazine I worked for and we got married a couple of years later.

JA: She was also, for a while, a student here at Rutgers.

HC: After we got married. … I think we had three kids at that time. She went to Newark-Rutgers at night. You know, after having the kids come and go and fed and clothed and so on, she'd hop on a bus or get a ride down with a friend and she, I think, completed two years. About that time, in retrospect, I'm not sure, … for some reason, she had to take biology and had to dissect a rat. That, plus the riots in Newark, which made it very unattractive to commute to Newark at night, and we had, I think the youngest kid was about three, … you know, all of those things combined, so, she never completed it, but she did very well for the time she was there. … She was amazed at the business people who were there, apparently, to get credits toward a degree and, you know, she said they were openly cheating in all the classes. She couldn't believe it. You know, it depends on your attitude. If you're there just to get some certificate that will get you a raise or if you're there after the war to get an education and get a job that you might otherwise not have been able to get, the attitude you bring to something certainly affects how you respond to it, how you handle it.

JA: Have any of your children followed in your footsteps in journalism?

HC: My oldest son tried to get into Rutgers and also applied at Northwestern. Rutgers was his safe school. He might have applied somewhere else. One Saturday morning, he gets a postcard from Northwestern saying the parents' day visit is on such-and-such a date. So, I said, "You know, you'd better check this out. Apparently there's a mistake. Check it out with the high school counselor when you go to school today." So, they checked and he had been accepted at Northwestern. He was not accepted at Rutgers. Now, I love dear old Rutgers and the Banks of the Old Raritan and all that, but, if you get in Northwestern, you ought to be able to get into Rutgers. Anyway, he went to Northwestern and did pretty well. He likes that area so much he lives out there. My second son went to Cook College, as it's now known, in horticulture and turf

management and all that. He's the superintendent of the golf course in Westfield. Third son went to Drew. He is a math major and the fourth, my daughter, did not go to college. She's got more sense than the three boys put together. I think I've often told them, if I had to bet on who would survive on a desert island with you three so-called intellectuals, I think I'd take Ellen. She'd find out what's happening and where to go and what to do and have the place under her control very fast. [laughter] Anyway, she's doing very well in the banking business.

SI: You mentioned also that you worked with the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival?

HC: Oh, yes. … It operates out of Drew University. It's not a college thing. It just uses the college facilities, Actor's Equity, it's a formal theater, and I wrote them a fan letter once and they called and they said they enjoyed it and would I like to be on their committee? So, they lured me in, and then, I eventually became an officer, secretary, on the board for, I don't know, seven or eight years and we've been regular subscribers to it for over twenty years, I guess, and they do some great job, great shows, and it's a nice bunch of people to work with. We went through a lot of problems with the management of it and hiring a new director and so on, and then, they built a new theater, which is very successful. So, we're still supporters of it, financially and going to the plays and so on. I've enjoyed it. We enjoy the theater in New York. Since the New Jersey Performing Art Center was built in Newark, we've been going to that every year, … ten or twelve times, for New Jersey Symphony, ballet and opera and so on. That's really been a great asset to the North Jersey area. Everybody, including me, thought, you know, "Newark is the pits. Who is ever going to go?" and it's been very successful and it's started a renaissance in Newark and I think this State Theater in George Street and some of these restaurants have given an air to New Brunswick that it didn't have, that made it more attractive and probably brought people in who, you know, can contribute something to it.

JA: Do you still stay in touch with your three friends from *Targum*?

HC: Yes, well, one is in California, but we used to write regularly and, now, we e-mail each other. One teaches English in Kalamazoo, he's retired, and one, Dave Cayer, who has been very active in alumni things and used to be in charge of grant proposals at Rutgers, he's in Plainfield. So, we see him fairly frequently. The one in Kalamazoo and California, we see if and when we go West or they come East, but we stay in fairly close touch.

SI: Having lived through World War II and the Korean War, how would you compare America's reaction to those conflicts to the post 9/11 War on Terrorism?

HC: Well, in all those instances, we were reacting and, in a certain sense, we were reacting to terrorism, too, the terrorist attack. The proposed war against Iraq, preemptive strike, I think, is probably the first time in our history where we have gone in first or talked about going in first. So, I have serious misgivings about that, unless Bush knows something that we don't know and can't tell us. I mean, if there is a real danger of a major poison gas attack all up and down the East Coast or if somebody's got an atom bomb waiting or something, then, that changes the picture. Failing that, I would rather see the United Nations go in and explore those options first, before we take it upon ourselves, because, you know, the doctrine of unintended consequences, who the hell knows what's going to happen? All those countries over there, how they will react

or whether that will start a major war, whether our European allies will stand behind us, you know, it can be monstrous results on that. I don't think he's doing this simply to try to get elected. That's the most cynical view. He's not my favorite guy in the whole world, but I give him more credit than that. I think he genuinely thinks that's what has to be done and the other thing is, he's got to pull his father's chestnuts out of the fire, because we didn't go in and get Saddam Hussein, but who says we're even going to get Saddam Hussein? If he flees to another country, what do we do then and, after we wipe him out, what do we do? Do we occupy the country for thirty years while they start a democracy and have Rotary Clubs and Miss America contests and so on? [laughter] You know, this idea that we can change a culture, I think, should have gone out long ago. I don't know exactly how they're going to accomplish this and whether there's a nice democratic group that's waiting to step in. I don't know whether that exists at all and the other thing is, we used to help Saddam Hussein when it was to our benefit to do so, ten, fifteen years ago. As you get older, you wonder about the value of war, because of so many terrible aftermaths, but, then, you figure, "If we didn't fight Hitler, where would the world be today?" Southeast Asia, I think we've been well to stay out of. If we lost there, the whole thing was going to go like dominoes. Well, the dominoes are all still standing. I don't know who invented that idea or why it didn't happen. I have no firm answers. It's just that I'm suspicious of that approach, because I think it can be very disastrous.

JA: What do you attribute the recent resurgence in interest about World War II in the popular media television, film, books, to?

HC: I have no idea. I'm sick to death of watching World War II newsreels. [laughter] God, I've seen them all. I lived through it. I don't know. Is it the romance of war, maybe? I don't know what it is. Some of the old movies still look pretty good. Some of them are pretty hokey, but I don't know. When I was a kid, we watched movies about World War I and *Sergeant York* and trench warfare and all of that. It seemed very romantic. Maybe this is the modern version of that, I don't know, but part of it is just this need to fill twenty-four hours a day, like CNN with this kid that got shot at the school. Now, that's a tragic thing, but my wife was watching it for about an hour-and-a-half. "What did the teacher say?" "She said, 'Get in, stand behind the fence.'" "Why? Did you go to class?" "No, we couldn't go to class. We had to stand there." Then, they interviewed somebody else. I said, "This is nothing." … I couldn't figure out why, except they just had to fill airtime. So, we don't necessarily need to go back to two fifteen-minute a day newscasts like I had in my youth, but do we need twenty-four hours a day, when nothing, absolutely nothing is happening and they're just rehashing the same old thing? I don't know. There ought to be some way where they could just play music. They'll say, "We'll be back if anything happens. Meanwhile, just relax," [laughter] but weather used to be, you know, "It will probably rain tomorrow." Now, you get the gigantic maps and the arrows and the geographic things and this and that, the whole thing. It's still not a hell of a lot more accurate than it was.

SI: Is there anything we missed or anything you would like to talk about?

HC: No, I think you guys reminded me of everything I was thinking to talk about. I would say the one thing I regret maybe about the college is that it wasn't more of a resident college, where you had kids staying around, as opposed to commuting and leaving on weekends. I think it

would be a nicer atmosphere in a small college, where everybody just is there all the time you can get, but we managed to make good friends and so on, but that would be the major social aspect of it. As far as teachers and so on, I'm sure it's the same everywhere. There are three or four or five that you remember after college that were really good. There were some that you couldn't believe ever got involved in a class, and then, a whole lot in the middle, but I've talked to other people about that at other colleges; they have the same feeling. They said, "After a certain number of years, there's maybe two or three that you remember." That's the way life is, you know. When you start studying all our Presidents, they all look great. Then, you start hearing all the stories about even Lincoln and Jefferson and all the people that you thought were absolutely perfect and you realize that they all had feet of clay. Roosevelt had, you know, all sorts of conniving ways and all the rest of them. So, you know, the lesson is, nobody is perfect and you shouldn't expect it, I guess, all right?

SI: Good. Thank you very much.

HC: I hope I have been helpful.

SI: Oh, yes, absolutely.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Thomas Perri 10/12/04
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/16/04
Reviewed by Hamilton C. Carson 12/2/04